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to the United Nations
Convention against Corruption**

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Review of implementation of the

United Nations Convention against Corruption

**Progress report on the implementation of the mandates of
the Implementation Review Group**

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note contains information on the conduct of country reviews in the first review cycle of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, in order to assist the Implementation Review Group in its function to oversee the review process and submit policy recommendations to the Conference of the States Parties for its consideration and approval.

* CAC/COSP/IRG/2013/1.



I. Organization and conduct of country reviews in the first to third years of the first review cycle

A. Drawing of lots

1. In accordance with paragraph 14 of the terms of reference of the Review Mechanism (hereinafter “the terms of reference”), “[t]he selection of States parties participating in the review process in a given year of a review cycle shall be carried out by the drawing of lots at the beginning of each review cycle”. Furthermore, paragraph 19 provides that “[t]he selection of the reviewing States parties shall be carried out by the drawing of lots at the beginning of each year of the cycle, with the understanding that States parties shall not undertake mutual reviews”.

2. In its resolution 4/1, the Conference endorsed the practice followed by the Group with regard to the procedural issues arising from the drawing of lots.

Selection of States parties under review

3. At the first session of the Implementation Review Group (hereinafter the Group), held in Vienna from 28 June to 2 July 2010,¹ a drawing of lots was carried out to determine the States parties under review in each year of the first review cycle.²

4. In accordance with the terms of reference, a State party selected for review in a given year, may, with a reasonable justification, defer participation to the following year of the review cycle. Eleven States parties deferred their reviews from the first to the second year of the review cycle. Three States parties deferred from the second to the third year. Five States parties deferred from the third to the fourth year.

5. The total number of States under review was 27 for the first year, 41 for the second year, and 35 for the third year.

6. In resolution 3/1, the Conference decided that one fourth of the States parties were to be reviewed in each of the first four years of each review cycle. As the review cycles are five years each, there was a fifth year foreseen to allow those States who had not completed their reviews to do so before the beginning of the second cycle, given that these States could not defer their review to the following year as was the case for those under review in the first three years of the cycle but would have two years to complete their reviews if necessary.

7. States ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the initial drawing of lots were to be reviewed starting in the fourth year of the first review cycle. Since the drawing of lots for States parties to be reviewed in the first cycle that took place in June 2010, 20 States have become parties to the Convention. Of these, five are in the African Group, eleven in the Asian Group, one in the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and one in the Western European and Other Group. There were indications at the time of reporting that more States were in the process of

¹ CAC/COSP/IRG/2010/7.

² The updated list of country review pairings is available on the UNODC website: www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Microsoft_Word_-_Country_pairings_-_Year_1-4.pdf.

ratifying or acceding to the Convention. Therefore, at least 61 States were to be reviewed starting in the fourth year.

8. The same practice which the Group established with regard to declining to serve as reviewing State in the same year while undergoing review is followed also for new States parties. The Group may wish to consider staggering reviews in order to take this into account by allowing for new States parties to begin their reviews with some delay in order to serve as reviewers first.

9. The Group may further provide guidance on how to achieve completion of the reviews of those States that were parties at the start of the first cycle. A decision will be required by the Group with regard to the schedules and requirements of reviews in year 4, and of reviews of those States that become parties after the fourth session of the Group. With regard to the reviews of new States parties, the Group may wish to consider the way in which those reviews are to be conducted in parallel to the start of the second cycle.

Selection of reviewing States parties

Drawing of lots

10. Paragraph 19 of the terms of reference provides that one of the two reviewing States parties shall be from the same geographical region as the State party under review. Two distinct boxes are used for the drawing of lots: the first contains all States parties from the same region and the second contains all States parties.

11. Paragraph 20 of the terms of reference requires each State party to have performed a minimum of one and a maximum of three reviews by the end of each review cycle. In order to ensure compliance with this requirement, the Group excluded States parties which had already performed two reviews from the drawing of lots at its third session. Furthermore, the Group conducted a first round of drawing of lots for reviewing States parties which included only those States parties which had never performed a review. This was done to alleviate the burden for new States parties which could find themselves necessarily under review and having to perform a review in year 4 in order to comply with the requirements of the terms of reference. When this complement was exhausted, those States parties which had performed one review were added to the boxes.

12. To date, four States parties have performed 3 reviews; 48 States parties have performed two reviews; 98 States parties have performed one review; and, 14 States parties have not yet performed any reviews. Of those 14 States, three had been drawn as reviewers but exercised their right to decline serving as reviewing State while undergoing their own review in year 3. Eight States which have not yet performed a review are also under review in the fourth year. A regional breakdown of the numbers of reviews performed by States parties will be made available to the Group at its fourth session in a conference room paper in order to provide the latest information on any new ratifications or accessions in the intervening period.

13. In theory, 122 reviewing States parties will be needed for the fourth year. The Group may wish to begin the drawing of lots with those 14 States which have not yet performed a review and the 98 States which have performed one review. Taking into account the fact that the 61 States under review could decline serving as reviewers, this would potentially eliminate 43 States from the boxes, out of which

eight States have never performed a review and 35 States have performed one review.

14. Depending on the readiness of those States which have performed one review to perform another two in the fourth year, a further complement of the 48 States already having performed two reviews may have to be added to the boxes. Due to the high number of new States parties in certain regional groups, this will likely be the case when drawing the reviewers from the same region. Further considerations, such as ensuring that there be no mutual reviews, and the possibility of redraws and unresponsiveness of States, will have to be taken into account.

States parties that had not submitted a list of governmental experts at the time of the drawing of lots

15. In accordance with paragraph 21 of the terms of reference, each State party shall appoint up to 15 governmental experts for the purpose of the review process. At the time of writing this report, eight States parties had not yet submitted their list of governmental experts. Out of these eight, four States had recently ratified or acceded to the Convention, and four States were unresponsive. Notes verbales were sent to those remaining States parties with a request to submit a list of governmental experts in accordance with paragraph 21 of the terms of reference and the secretariat undertakes extensive efforts to ensure that such lists be submitted. In its resolution 4/1, the Conference called upon States parties that had not yet done so to submit their lists of governmental experts well ahead of the drawing of lots, and reminded them to keep the lists up to date.

B. Schedule and conduct of country reviews

16. In its resolution 4/1, the Conference endorsed the guidelines for governmental experts and the secretariat in the conduct of country reviews (hereinafter “the guidelines”) that had been finalized upon its request by the Group. The guidelines set out indicative timelines for country reviews in order to ensure the consistency and efficiency of the review process. The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the schedule of country reviews conducted in the first to third years.

17. Of the 35 country reviews in the third year, 29 started on 20 July 2012, following the drawing of lots at the third session and six started on 14 December 2012 following a redraw at the resumed third session of the Group which had been requested in six cases due to the unresponsiveness of the previously selected reviewing States parties.

Initial steps of country reviews

Confirmation of readiness to undergo review

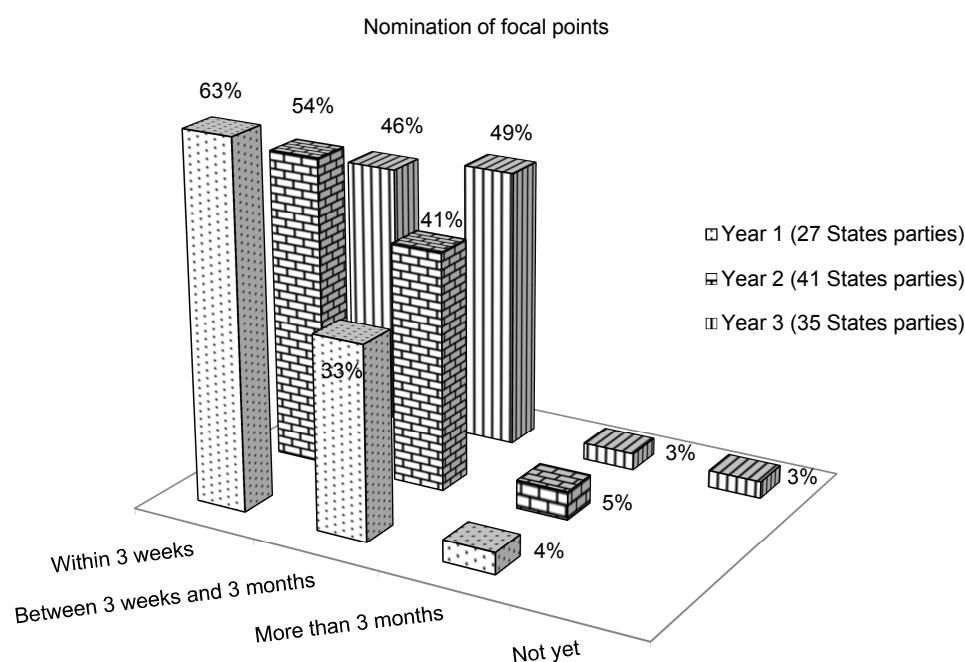
18. Some delays have been experienced in the first year due to countries taking time to communicate their readiness to undergo review. No such delays were experienced in the second year. In the third year, out of five States that deferred their review to the following year, three had informed the Group of their decision to do so already during the third session, and two more had informed the secretariat by the resumed third session. However, one State selected for review in year 3 has

remained unresponsive with regard to its readiness to undergo review. In effect, therefore, 34 reviews have been initiated for the third year.

Appointment of a focal point to coordinate the participation of a State party under review

19. In accordance with paragraph 17 of the terms of reference and paragraph 13 of the guidelines, a State party under review, within three weeks of officially being informed, shall appoint a focal point — and shall inform the secretariat accordingly — to coordinate its participation in the review. Late nominations of focal points have caused considerable delays in the country reviews concerned. In resolution 4/1, the Conference urged States parties under review in a given year to ensure the timely nomination of their focal points in accordance with the guidelines.

20. In order to undertake early preparations, the secretariat sends notes verbales before the drawing of lots encouraging States under review to nominate focal points at an early stage. Over half of the States parties under review in the second and third years availed themselves of this possibility, thereby also ensuring that the focal points participated in the training workshops held immediately after the sessions of the Group.



21. All appointed focal points in the third year had been offered training and 30 had availed themselves of the opportunity. In a few cases, the focal point had a coordinating and not substantive or technical role and had designated another person to undergo training.

22. Of the States under review in year 3, however, one unresponsive State mentioned above has not appointed a focal point nor undertaken any initial steps

with regard to its review. Ongoing efforts to communicate with this State included letters from the UNODC regional representative and bilateral approaches from Permanent Missions in New York of other States parties from the same region.

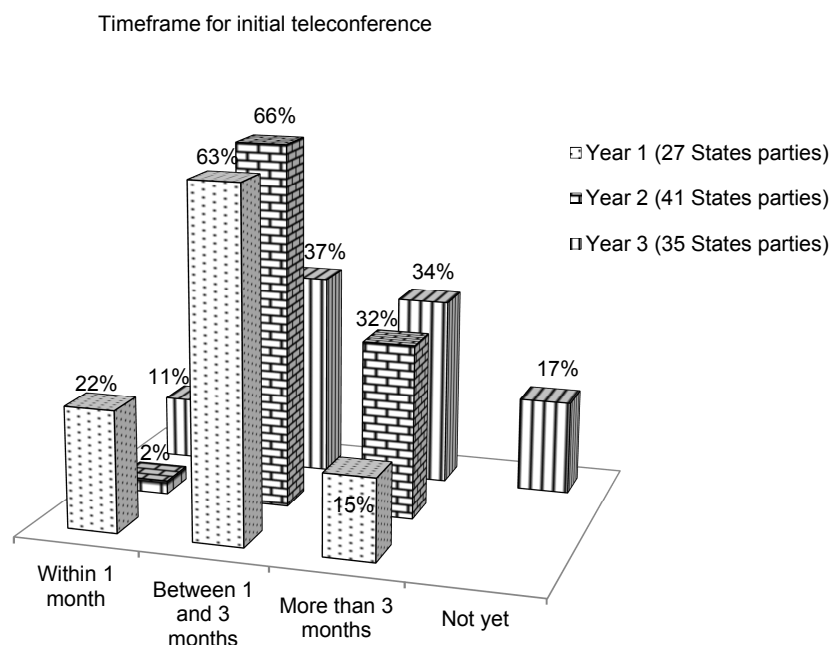
23. In addition, a few States also changed their focal points after the review had begun, prompting delays as the initial steps were re-organized.

24. For the fourth year, the secretariat sent notes verbales in February 2013 for the same purpose and at time of writing several appointments were pending. Several States had already initiated work on their responses to the self-assessment checklist.

25. In terms of background of the focal points, they were from national anti-corruption bodies, Ministries of Justice and other national authorities, including Ministries for Foreign Affairs or Modernization. In the second and third years, several States established interministerial or coordination committees to oversee and conduct the review process at the national level. Several focal points had made their contact details available at the national level.

Communication of contact details of governmental experts by reviewing States parties and organization of the initial teleconference

26. Paragraph 16 of the guidelines provides that a telephone conference shall be organized within one month after the State party under review has officially been informed of the beginning of the conduct of the country review. This telephone conference involves the State party under review, the reviewing States parties and the secretariat staff assigned to the country review. With a view to organizing the initial telephone conference, the secretariat requested reviewing States parties to designate contact persons among the governmental experts and to communicate their contact details.



27. In the third year, six redraws took place due to unresponsiveness of the selected reviewing States parties to these communications. In addition, several country reviews were delayed by the late receipt of contact details or changes in reviewing experts after the beginning of the review.

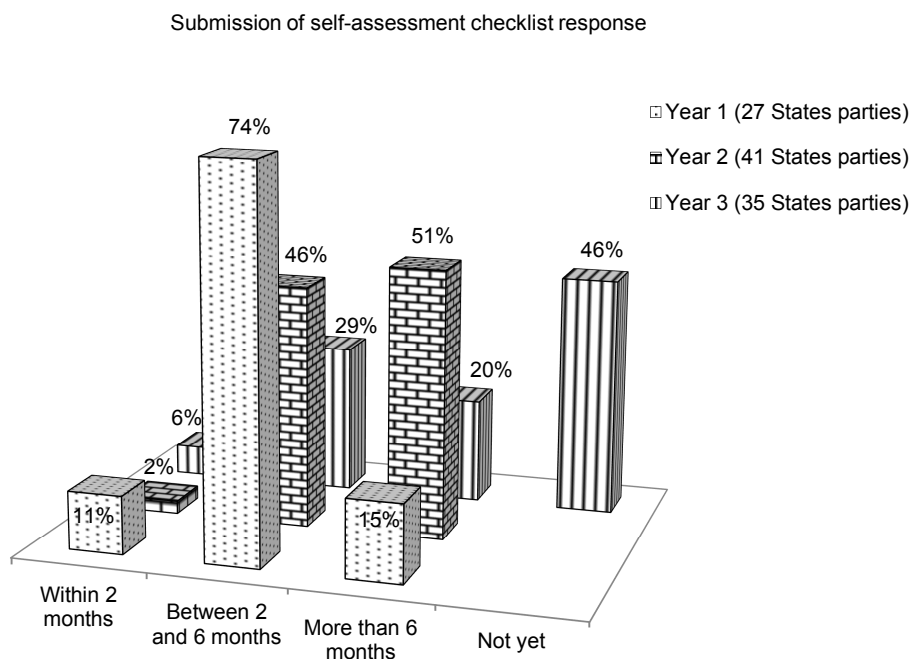
28. Delays were experienced in most reviews for the organization of the initial teleconference in accordance with paragraph 16 of the guidelines. Four were held within one month of the beginning of the country review and 13 within one and three months. Several introductions took place on the margins of the resumed third session and most were held thereafter, with several delayed due to the redraws.

Self-assessment

29. According to paragraph 15 of the guidelines, the State party under review, within two months of being officially informed of the beginning of the conduct of the country review, shall provide to the secretariat its response to the comprehensive self-assessment checklist. The date for submission of the self-assessment checklist was discussed during initial telephone conferences. In several cases, States parties under review indicated that they would require a longer time period to complete the self-assessment, taking into account, inter alia, technical constraints and the need for inter-agency coordination.

30. Among the 35 reviews that were initiated for the third year of the current review cycle, 19 States parties under review had submitted completed responses to the checklist at the time of writing. Two States parties had submitted responses within the timeline by 20 September 2012. Ten more States had submitted their responses between two and six months after the official beginning of the review, and a further seven States up to the time of writing. The rest were still pending and active follow-up was being undertaken to ensure the submission of these responses, including by providing assistance through UNODC's field offices and partners. Several States parties had sought assistance from the secretariat in order to complete their self-assessment responses, more information below on assistance provided.

31. States parties under review in years 2 and 3 took longer to complete their responses to the self-assessment checklist. At the same time, it should be mentioned that in general, the self-assessment responses in years 2 and 3 contained more complete information and thus, it could be possible that during the active dialogue phase less time would be spent on gathering missing data. Several States had set up coordination committees and held drafting and validation workshops for their responses. Some States had conducted a gap analysis in anticipation of their review and used the outcome for their submission.



32. With regard to consultations with national stakeholders and publications of the responses to the comprehensive self-assessment checklist, two States parties informed the secretariat of consultations with stakeholders for year 1 and eight States parties for year 2. Several more had consulted stakeholders and circulated their responses to them or posted the responses on national websites for comment, or on the UNODC website. Several States had included national stakeholders in the national committees set up to coordinate and oversee the review process. Specifically, some States parties in year 3 had undertaken to conduct consultations with the private sector on their responses. Other States informed the secretariat of collaboration with academia in drafting the responses.

Desk review

33. According to paragraph 21 of the guidelines, within one month of the receipt of the response to the comprehensive self-assessment checklist and any supplementary information provided by the State party under review, governmental experts shall submit to the secretariat the outcome of the desk review.

34. During the initial introductions and in accordance with the guidelines, reviewing experts were invited to divide tasks and issues among themselves, taking into account their respective fields of expertise. In most reviews the experts agreed to divide their work according to the two chapters under review and in others they decided that both sets of reviewing experts would work on both chapters III and IV. In a few cases, the work was divided according to specific clusters of provisions.

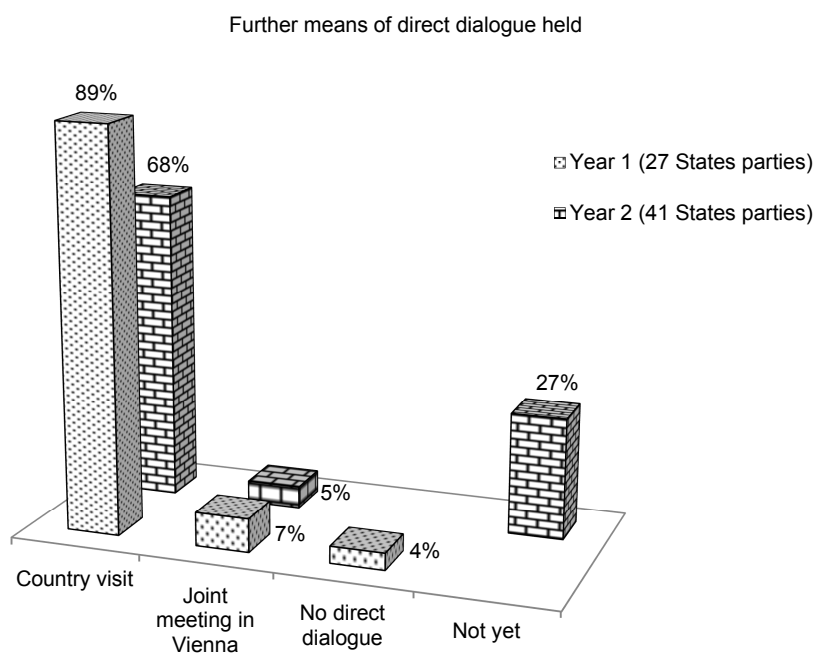
35. At time of writing, three desk reviews for the responses to the self-assessments of the second year were pending, due to late submission of information and difficulties with translation. For the third year, four desk reviews had been received, with several more in preparation. Several desk reviews were in translation.

36. Overall, the desk reviews were increasingly being submitted in the blueprint format that had been prepared and circulated by the secretariat after insertion of the responses to the self-assessment checklist. This allowed the reviewers and the secretariat to work on a single consolidated document, where made possible by language requirements. Reviewing experts were also encouraged to submit requests for additional information or documents at the outset and pending completion of the desk review in order to facilitate transmission and translation of documents.

Further means of direct dialogue

37. Pursuant to paragraph 24 of the guidelines, if agreed by the State party under review, the desk review should be complemented with any further means of direct dialogue, such as a country visit or a joint meeting at the United Nations Office at Vienna.

38. Out of the 27 States parties in the first year of reviews, 24 country visits and two joint meetings in Vienna had taken place. Out of the 41 States parties in the second year of reviews, 28 country visits and two joint meetings in Vienna had taken place, with another ten States under review having agreed to means of direct dialogue most of which were in planning stages. Out of the 35 States parties in the third year of reviews, two country visits had taken place and the majority of States had agreed to further means of dialogue of which several were in different planning stages.

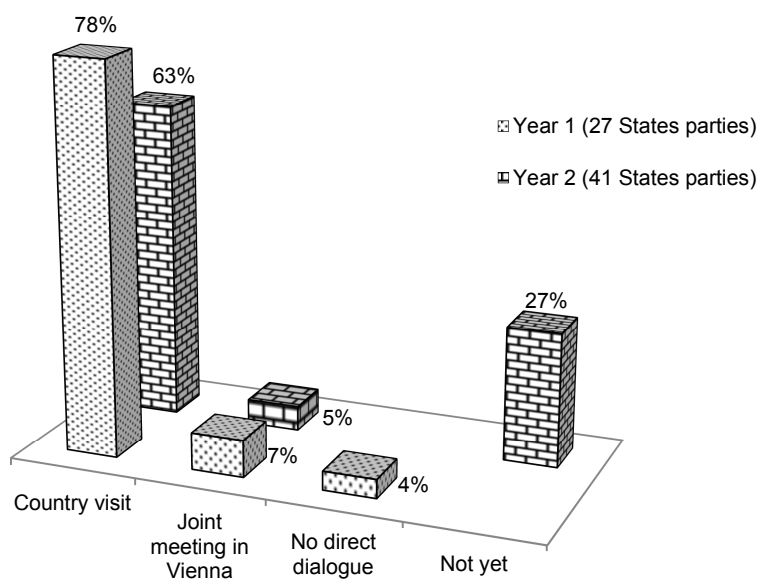


39. In accordance with paragraph 24 of the guidelines, the country visit is to be planned and organized by the State party under review. Focal points drafted the agenda and submitted it to the reviewers and the secretariat prior to the country visit. Based on the experience of the first year and following guidance provided by

the Group, the agenda for country visits included preparation time for coordination before the beginning of the meetings as well as longer debriefing sessions at the end of the visit where possible in order to agree on the main observations. Interpretation requirements also affected the length of country visits and debriefing meetings.

40. Where country visits were held in the first and second years, in accordance with paragraph 30 of the terms of reference, the majority of them had included sessions with other stakeholders. Those sessions had been organized in some cases in the form of panels including civil society, the private sector, academia, trade associations and other national stakeholders. In other cases, other stakeholders were represented as members of national coordinating committees.

Engagement of stakeholders in country visit



Outcome of the country review process

41. Pursuant to paragraph 33 of the terms of reference and paragraph 30 of the guidelines, the reviewing governmental experts are to prepare a country review report and executive summary, in close cooperation and coordination with the State party under review and assisted by the secretariat. The report shall identify successes, good practices and challenges, and make observations for the implementation of the Convention. Where appropriate, the report shall include the identification of technical assistance needs for the purpose of improving the implementation of the Convention.

42. The executive summaries of the country review reports are placed on-line, both as part of the documentation of the Group, as well as on the country profile page³ for ease of reference. At the time of writing, 19 executive summaries had been

³ www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/country-profile/index.html.

finalized and made available to the Group for the reviews in year 1 and all others were being finalized. In the second year, twelve executive summaries had been finalized and made available to the Group, with several more to be submitted for processing before the fourth session of the Group. In several cases, agreement was found on the findings contained in the draft executive summary before finalization of the full-fledged country review report. The final agreement on the reports had been delayed in some cases by the need for further consultation at the national level, or validation by parliaments or councils of ministers.

43. In several country reviews, translation of the draft country review reports and executive summaries in the agreed working languages of the review proved to be necessary, although the guidelines did not make provision for the additional time needed. Governmental experts and the secretariat continued to liaise with the focal points of States under review at this stage in order to seek clarification or further information. In some cases, due to the length of time necessary for agreement on the report, new or amended legislation or measures had become available and where appropriate these were reflected in footnotes.

44. The length of country review reports depending on the language and number of annexes ranged from approximately 100 pages to over 500 pages.

C. Role of the secretariat of the Mechanism

45. According to paragraph 49 of the terms of reference, the secretariat shall perform all tasks required for the efficient functioning of the Mechanism, including providing technical and substantive support, upon request, to States parties in the course of the functioning of the Mechanism.

Training courses

46. In accordance with the terms of reference and the guidelines, the secretariat organized training courses to familiarize focal points of States parties under review and governmental experts of reviewing States with the substantive provisions of the Convention and the methodology of the review process. In its resolution 4/1, the Conference welcomed the training provided by the secretariat and to date, almost all States parties that have been involved in one or both capacities in reviews have had participants in such training courses. An analysis of almost 250 questionnaires completed by participants since 2010 was undertaken in order to further refine the modules and delivery. The training courses are subject to the availability of voluntary contributions and due to the funding shortfall for year 4, the secretariat will only be in a position to fund participants from LDCs and from new States parties, who have not been trained yet.

47. Eight training courses for focal points of States under review and governmental experts of reviewing States were organized between June and November 2012, including six in Vienna and two regional workshops in Moscow and Kuala Lumpur respectively. Further training courses were held subsequent to the resumed third session of the Group, including several ad hoc training programmes that were provided to States parties upon request.

48. Ad hoc national workshops, in most cases to assist with drafting responses to the comprehensive self-assessment checklist, were held in Afghanistan, Albania, Botswana, Cape Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Egypt, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mauritania, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Romania, Tunisia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates. Several of these were carried out in cooperation with UNDP. UNODC also organized and delivered a joint UNDP-UNODC workshop for focal points of the UNCAC Review Mechanism on preparation and lessons learned of the review process, held in Burkina Faso in July 2012.

Role in the conduct of country reviews

49. Two staff members of the secretariat are assigned to each country review, with consideration, inter alia, to the agreed working languages of the reviews. Internal arrangements were in place in order to ensure a smooth and consistent operation of the Mechanism. In particular, secretariat staff are tasked with the overview of country review processes and preparations for the procedural requirements of the reviews, as well as with ensuring the submission of executive summaries as well as consistency across the different country reviews.

50. In order to support the desk review and the ensuing dialogue, the secretariat has been called upon to prepare a consolidated version of the outcome of the desk review upon receipt of comments from the governmental experts, updating the document as further exchanges between the focal point and experts went on, and finalizing the drafting of the country review report and executive summary. Where in-house language capacity existed, this was done directly in the languages of the reviews, thereby minimizing the need for translation and allowing focal points and experts to engage in consultations and dialogue in their own languages.

51. Where the State party under review requested further means of direct dialogue, i.e. a country visit or joint meeting at the United Nations Office at Vienna, in accordance with paragraphs 29 of the terms of reference and 24 of the guidelines, the secretariat secured funding from voluntary contributions for one of these means of direct dialogue. Due to a funding shortfall for year 4 at the time of writing, the participation of only one governmental expert per reviewing State party will be funded. In addition, States would be called upon to fund their own country visits where possible.

D. Language issues

52. In accordance with paragraph 51 of the terms of reference, “[t]he country review process may be conducted in any of the working languages of the Mechanism. The secretariat shall be responsible for providing the required translation and interpretation into any of the working languages of the Mechanism, as necessary for its efficient functioning.” According to paragraph 15 of the guidelines, the secretariat shall have responses to the self-assessment checklist translated, if necessary, and circulated to the governmental experts within one month.

53. From the 27 country reviews conducted in the first year of the review cycle, 48 per cent were conducted in one language, 45 per cent in two languages, and

7 per cent in three languages. In order to facilitate the reviews, experts agreed to work in the language of the State party under review or in English, thereby reducing the number of working languages in the reviews. Of the 41 reviews of the second year, 34 per cent were conducted in one language, 59 per cent in two languages and 7 per cent in three languages. Translation was required from a language other than one of the six official languages in two country reviews. Of the 34 reviews out of 35 in the third year where the language requirements had been determined, 41 per cent were to be conducted in one language, 53 per cent in two languages, and 6 per cent in three languages.

54. Translation requirements had to be accommodated throughout the review process. In addition to the translation of the response to the self-assessment checklist and of the final country review report, additional translation and interpretation was provided during the desk review for comments submitted by reviewing States parties, in the ensuing dialogue with the State party under review and for the agreement on the country review report. As part of ongoing efforts to reduce the costs of translation and maximize the efficiency of the reviews, governmental experts were encouraged to use where possible the language of the State under review or a common working language with the other reviewing State, as had been the practice in the first and second years. In order to reduce costs incurred by translation, focal points and reviewing experts were encouraged to avoid requesting several rounds of translation over the course of the review.

II. Lessons learned and efforts to improve the review process

Organization of the Secretariat

55. Based on lessons learned from the conduct of the country reviews carried out in the first to third years, the secretariat has taken a range of actions to address challenges that arose.

56. Internal arrangements have been made in order to ensure a smooth and consistent operation of the Mechanism, and in particular all six official languages of the United Nations can now be used as working languages by secretariat staff. The deployment of field-based advisors has enabled improved delivery of assistance to States, both currently under review and preparing for reviews, as well as for follow-up on the outcome and possible technical assistance.

57. In view of the volume of translation requirements that exceeded in-house, as well as increasingly the UNODC field office absorption capacity, and in view of the problems encountered with the consistency and quality of the final products, the secretariat has issued contracts to six companies following a bidding process for comprehensive translation services conducted in accordance with United Nations rules on procurement.

Updated tools

58. Pursuant to its endorsement by the Conference of the States Parties at its third session and in accordance with the terms of reference of the Review Mechanism, the comprehensive self-assessment checklist was to be used by all States parties under review as the first step of the review process.

59. As background knowledge about the State party under review was identified as a premise for effective review, the introductory part of the self-assessment checklist, entitled “General information”, was further expanded to include, in addition to questions on the domestic legal, institutional and political system, previous assessments and possible draft laws or measures under consideration. States provided this information at times even before the submission of completed responses so as to facilitate translation and initial review of the materials by the governmental experts.

60. The secretariat continued to refine the layout of the new country profile page for States parties to the Convention.⁴ These pages contain all the relevant information concerning the State’s participation in the Mechanism, including the executive summary of the country review report made available in all official languages where it had been finalized, as well as links to legislation available on the TRACK portal and notification information under the Convention. Information contained in the portal was also updated and validated by States as their reviews were concluded. States parties could request the secretariat to post on its website their responses to the checklist and their final country review reports.

61. In order to facilitate the drafting of the country review report, the secretariat undertook with the Information Technology Service of UNODC to develop software enabling the transfer of the responses contained in the comprehensive self-assessment checklist to the blueprint for country review reports. This feature was already being used with responses in English received in year 3 and was in the process of being rolled out in all official languages at the time of writing. The reviewing experts were to receive the responses to the self-assessment in the blueprint form under subparagraph (a) under each article of the Convention, and the experts could therefore provide their desk review as free text or insert it into the relevant subparagraphs (b) under the articles of the Convention.

62. With a view to preparing for the review of chapters II (preventive measures) and V (asset recovery) during the second review cycle starting in 2015, the secretariat was reviewing the question flow contained in the software in order to further tailor it to the substantive requirements for review and ensure its user-friendliness.

Initial steps of the review process

63. The practice of holding training courses immediately after the meetings of the Group enabled cost efficiencies in funding travel for LDCs as well as greater participation. Additional savings were to be realized by delivering training directly in all official languages.

64. The secretariat continued the practice of issuing a note verbale to countries whose reviews were upcoming and several States parties under review in the fourth year have already informed the secretariat of ongoing preparations and are being assisted from UNODC headquarters as well as by UNODC’s regional advisors and other partners.

65. While the quality and thoroughness of responses to the self-assessment are crucial to the review process, focal points should bear in mind translation

⁴ www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/country-profile/index.html.

constraints in reviews conducted in two or more languages and quote only laws or other measures specifically relevant to the implementation of provisions under review. Several responses received were over 500 pages long, which raised difficulties in translation as well as analysis of responses.

66. The late communication of contact details of governmental experts continued to delay the organization of the initial teleconference and of the country reviews, and changes in the composition of the review teams impeded progress in a few reviews. Reviewing countries were encouraged to identify the experts on their lists who would perform the review at an early stage and undertake to keep them throughout the process including for participation in the means of direct dialogue, whenever relevant.

67. Focal points and governmental experts were requested to inform the secretariat in a timely manner of their possible attendance to meetings of the Group, as well as the working groups on asset recovery and prevention, in order to organize and schedule meetings with the reviewing experts where requested by the State party under review. Face-to-face meetings, with teleconferences connecting any missing parties, proved to be a valuable and effective means of communication during the reviews. Trilateral meetings were thus to be organized under item 2 of the agenda using the resources available to the Group.

Conduct of country reviews

68. As had been raised in sessions of the Group, country visits took into account the need for more time for the experts to coordinate and debrief. Additional time was allocated at the beginning of visits for meetings among the experts and with the focal point, and in-depth sessions were held at the end of the visits to consider the findings of the draft country review report and executive summary.

69. With regard to technical assistance needs, such needs were highlighted in responses to the checklist and taken up by the reviewing experts, but further work was often required to provide a comprehensive overview of needs with regard to implementation.⁵ Several States parties also wished to identify needs beyond the strict implementation of the two chapters under review and submitted draft legislation or measures for the experts' consideration.

70. The completion of the final stages of the review process, i.e. drafting of the country review reports and the executive summaries and agreement thereto was lengthier than foreseen in the guidelines. This was due, *inter alia*, to language issues which necessitated translation of various versions of the reports, and the need to effectively and accurately analyse the information included in the country review reports. In addition, several States needed to undertake approval processes at the national level which often took more time.

71. Once the country review process was finalized and where States had identified technical assistance needs, the secretariat sent a letter to the Government in order to initiate discussions on how best to fill gaps and ensure follow-up to the outcome of the review. It had been proven useful for the follow-up to these needs to have meetings organized with development partners and other multilateral agencies to

⁵ See CAC/COSP/IRG/2013/3 for an analysis of technical assistance needs emerging from the review process.

bring the needs to their attention and encourage the provision of assistance in response.

72. The secretariat will provide updated information on the review process of the first to third years of the current review cycle in an oral update to the Group at its fourth session.

73. The Group may wish to submit recommendations for the Conference to consider on the conduct of reviews in the fourth year of the current review cycle. The Group may also wish to consider providing guidance to the secretariat on proposals to improve the conduct of reviews with a view to preparing the second cycle.
